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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [MO](#)  
SUBJECT: NDI: UNCLE SAM WANTS TO "EDUCATE" MOROCCAN  
POLITICAL PARTIES?

1. This cable is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

2. (SBU) Summary: French-language daily, l'Economiste (August 1), published an article about the "American-Canadian" National Democratic Institute (NDI), entitled "An NGO to 'educate' the parties." The article, which included an interview with the director of NDI Morocco, Gerard Latulippe, presented NDI's mission and analysis of party politics in Morocco. Latulippe stressed the absence of a national vision from Moroccan political parties in the current political environment and emphasized that parties must adapt to increased public expectations. He commended the Party of Justice and Development (PJD) for being the "only" political party in Morocco to be organized on the national level. The interview clearly expressed that NDI does not wish to pass judgment on political parties or "impose" change, but rather supports the change already underway in Morocco. Media reaction from the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) party French-language daily, Liberation (August 2), and their Arabic-language daily, Al Ittihad Al Ishtiraqi (August 2), however, criticized the interview for being patronizing and reflecting a "deep ignorance" of Moroccan history. The USFP papers denounced Latulippe for demonstrating his "choices and preferences" for the 2007 elections and "overstepping" NDI's mandate and claim of objectivity. End Summary.

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Modernizing Party Politics  
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3. (SBU) In the interview with Gerard Latulippe, resident director of NDI Morocco, l'Economiste states that the goal of NDI is to teach political parties modern communication techniques and marketing to "seduce their electors." (NOTE: NDI Morocco operates in part under its MEPI-financed cooperative agreement under USAID's Consortium for Electoral and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS). END NOTE.) Latulippe is quoted as wanting to introduce programs that will encourage the "interaction between citizens and their representatives," encourage women's political participation, and increase the level of ethics in the administration. Latulippe claimed that political parties lack a national vision because electoral campaigns used to be organized by constituency, which meant that candidates were elected locally based on "specific references" and not for their electoral programs.

14. (SBU) He noted that many parties overlap because they "have not been required to differentiate themselves" historically, but affirmed that "this is in the process of changing," as public expectations are higher than they were. Latulippe commented that the larger, traditional parties have realized that they must create a "new momentum" to ensure 2007 will be a "year of change," representing a "rupture with the current approach." Latulippe noted that the interest level in NDI's offerings is "unequal" among political parties, however, he claimed that more and more parties continue to solicit NDI's activities as the election nears. He noted the creation of internal committees in several political parties dedicated to the organization of an electoral campaign for 2007.

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Latulippe on Political Parties  
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15. (SBU) Latulippe commended the PJD as the "only party" which has not "hesitated to adhere to modernity," and has organized itself on a national level. Latulippe reported that according to his information, the Koutla, or democratic bloc alliance between the USFP, Istiqlal, and the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS), will have their own organizations and will be running autonomous electoral campaigns. (NOTE: On July 26, the Koutla signed a joint declaration to coordinate efforts in preparation for the 2007 legislative elections "in a constructive unionist spirit." END NOTE.)

16. (SBU) When asked about his predictions for the 2007 election, Latulippe responded that he was "more optimistic than six months ago." He explained that in his view more politicians will enjoy popular legitimacy and that election day could result in a "theater of surprises." He noted that the transformation currently taking root in certain political parties could prove fruitful.

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Media Criticism of Interview  
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17. (SBU) USFP's French-language daily, Liberation, and their Arabic-language daily, Al Ittihad Al Ishtiraqi, published critical responses to the l'Economiste interview on August 2. The Al Ittihad Al Ishtiraqi column claimed that although Latulippe has the right to his own opinions and to "think he has enough information on Moroccan political parties to become an expert, he is not allowed at all, in a sovereign country that has a long history in democratic struggle, to have the 'guts' to describe the national parties as 'not political' and think any political party needs his advice." Al Ittihad Al Ishtiraqi argued that Latulippe lacks a "real" understanding of Morocco's democratic transition because he was born in a democratic country and the fact that he is taking "his red pen and giving grades and ranks is not acceptable." The Al Ittihad Al Ishtiraqi article concluded by saying that even if Latulippe "has choices and preferences," he has to learn, just like "any other American institution," to "keep (them) to himself."

18. (SBU) The Liberation front page commentary, entitled "NDI: Mistake of Cooperation," emphasized that his interview was full of judgment, despite his claim of objectivity, and that his analysis reflected his "choices and preferences" for the 2007 election. In response to Latulippe's comment that political parties lack a national vision and that, traditionally, only local elite have had access power, Liberation said Latulippe demonstrated a "flagrant ignorance" of Morocco's history of rich political opposition and that he should have "at least" consulted the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) report before "his 'electoral pets' had contact with the masses." Liberation, making a reference to the IRI controversy, stated that "the Moroccan people do not have short memories, and no sponsored or organized polls will substitute for its will."

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Latulippe's Reaction to Media Criticism  
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¶9. (SBU) On August 2, Poloff met with Latulippe to discuss, among other issues, his interview with l'Economiste. Latulippe explained that while the initial media criticism of his interview was unexpected, he understood how his comments could be misinterpreted. Elaborating on his comments regarding the absence of national vision from political parties, Latulippe said that no political party has the experience of running a national electoral campaign or developing a national campaign message. Most party expertise lies in the organization and execution of local electoral campaigns, he explained. He, however, noted that the PJD, because it is organized at the national level, is well-placed to run a national election campaign. Latulippe argued that the PJD vote is "soft" and warned of a potential PJD weakness in rural areas.

¶10. (SBU) Recalling the recent visit of Jason Kenney, a Member of the Canadian House of Commons, Latulippe explained that Kenney held individual sessions with several political parties on the technical aspects of running an electoral campaign. According to Latulippe, whereas most political parties sent only senior party representatives and were questioning the merits of running a national electoral campaign, the PJD sent their election team. This team asked technical implementation questions during their session. Latulippe said that the PPS, the Popular Movement Union (UMP), Al Ahd, the National Rally of Independents (RNI), and the USFP are now in the process of forming their respective election teams, which is a positive sign and might lead to "surprises" if the campaigns are conducted effectively.

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Comment  
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¶11. (SBU) Although the l'Economiste article features a front-page cartoon entitled, "Uncle Sam wants to 'educate' our political parties," which insinuates US heavy-handedness with respect to the direction of political parties, the paper clearly explained that NDI does not intervene in party platforms, nor does it pass judgment on political parties. One of the roles for NDI is to "push the dynamic unleashed by Morocco," according to Latulippe, and NDI activities "support the democratic process unleashed by the king."

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